

# **Animal Production Food Safety State-Based Outreach Partnership Proposed Agreement July 31, 2001**

**TITLE:** Indiana's Meat Source Safety Risk Assessment Project

**GOAL:** To minimize the possibility of animals entering the food supply, which present a risk to food safety by increasing the reporting of suspicious animals at the farm level; increasing surveillance at small, state-inspected meat processing plants; and training veterinarians and producers how to assess livestock for food safety risk animals destined for human consumption.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Increase surveillance (through sampling) of ruminants at risk of carrying central nervous system disorders at the smallest of Indiana's meat processing plants and at the farm level;
2. Increase the number of bovine brains submitted to USDA under the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) surveillance program;
3. Develop a food safety risk assessment system for cattle, sheep and goats presented for slaughter to give producers, slaughter plant employees, meat inspectors and veterinarians the necessary tools to make sound decisions earlier;
4. Educate slaughter plant owners/operators/employees, livestock owners, meat inspectors and veterinarians about high-risk signs in food animals that warrant diversion from the food supply. Provide information about alternatives for disposal.
5. Communicate with producers and veterinarians through field days, trade shows and printed material about the value of risk-assessed animals going to slaughter;
6. Reduce the number of animals condemned when presented for slaughter as a result of suspect animals being diverted before entering the processing system;
7. Develop a standardized form, accepted by all slaughter plants in Indiana, to allow cattle and sheep producers to declare their animals have been raised in compliance with the ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban.

**BACKGROUND:** Consumer concern about a safe meat supply has risen in the shadow of Great Britain's problems with BSE. Although BSE is not known to be present in this country, the staff of the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) has taken consumer concerns seriously and developed a successful BSE-sampling protocol with the cooperation of the managers of state-inspected meat slaughter plants. The result has been a dramatic increase in the number of bovine brain samples collected for USDA testing.

**PARTNERS:** BOAH will lead this project, in cooperation with the local USDA, APHIS-Veterinary Services staff, with the support of the Indiana State Department of Health. The program will also operate with the support of the Indiana Veterinary Medical Association, Indiana Meat Packers and Processors Association and the red meat commodity organizations, particularly the Indiana Beef Cattle Association, Indiana Pork Producers Association, Indiana Association of Professional Dairymen, Indiana Elk Breeders Association and the Indiana Sheep Association. Purdue University staff from the School of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Science Department, Food Science Department and Cooperative Extension Service will also play critical support roles to this effort.

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:** BOAH's Risk Assessment project will be adopted and expanded over three years in an effort to expand on Indiana's BSE brain-sampling program. Development of this system will take the initiative to a new level, pushing awareness and responsibility further down the chain in the red meat production system.

**Year 1:** Of Indiana's 140 state-inspected meat processing plants, 38 are rated as "custom exempt." Of those, 27 slaughter red meat animals for human consumption. These custom exempt 27 plants are considered

among the smallest operations and are subject to the least amount of on-going surveillance of animals being presented for slaughter.

BOAH proposes to increase submission of brain samples from suspect animals by training and educating the plants' owners, managers and employees. During the first year of this project, personnel at each custom exempt plant will receive five hours of training from a BOAH or USDA field veterinarian. Training will focus on evaluating the suitability of suspicious animals presented for slaughter. Plant staff will also be informed of when to contact a BOAH veterinarian to provide a veterinary medical opinion and/or collect samples.

In a related, concurrent project, BOAH will develop a standardized certification form for producers to declare their livestock has not been fed any banned/restricted ruminant material, as set forth in the Food and Drug Administration's ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban. BOAH will work closely with the Office of the State Chemist (which oversees feedmills in Indiana), livestock commodity groups, renderers and the meat packing industry to ensure adoption and acceptance of a common form for all parties.

**Year 2:** The second phase of the BOAH initiative focuses on developing a list of risk-based ratings for animals destined for slaughter. Under the rating system, scores will be assigned to an individual animal to determine its suitability for human consumption. Ultimately, this evaluation will occur at the farm, prior to being presented to slaughter. Animals scoring in a high-risk or questionable category will be evaluated by a BOAH field veterinarian.

During Year 2, this assessment checklist will be provided to private veterinary practitioners through a train-the-trainer protocol. BOAH will work closely with Indiana's Bovine Practitioners group to help large animal veterinarians understand the need for the assessment process at the farm level, and educate them about proper disposal alternatives for at-risk or unfit ruminants. Printed educational material will be developed to communicate the goal and need of this initiative to producers.

**Year 3:** In the final phase of this project, BOAH will continue the on-going educational initiative by working to inform producers directly, in partnership with veterinarians. Communication efforts will center around trade publications, industry meetings and field days. Printed educational material will be distributed to more than 12,000 Indiana dairy producers (who ultimately market old cows), sheep and goat producers and beef producers who operate in Indiana.